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Dehumanisation as Derision or Delight? Overcoming class-prejudice and species-prejudice in Job

Abstract: In Job 30:1–8, Job dehumanises his detractors: he depicts his low-class opponents as vile creatures in the wilderness. Dehumanisation has been a common strategy to devalue outgroups from Job's time to our own. It functions by assuming a human-animal hierarchy (in which animals lack value), and mapping it onto a social hierarchy, delegitimising the animalised individuals at the bottom. By using this strategy, Job reveals his prejudice around other species and low classes. The logic of the divine speeches, however, overturns both these prejudices. The speeches respond to Job's classism, not by denying that low-class humans are animals, but rather by celebrating animals (38:39–39:30). For Job, the non-human was a source of derision; for God it is a source of delight.

Keywords: Job, animals, dehumanisation, prejudice, Job 30, class

'[A] pack of slavering chav estate mongrels spoiling for a scrap'[1]

Thus a British regional newspaper depicted its working-class targets in the early 2000s. And thus it degraded, devalued, and delegitimised in one flourish of dehumanisation. The writer assumes a human-animal hierarchy in which people rank above dogs – especially disgusting 'slavering' ones, 'mongrels' without pedigree. A basic species-prejudice is rhetorically harnessed to enhance class-prejudice: the poor are dirty animals without value. Indeed, dehumanisation has been used as a

[1] Cited in Jones 2012: 125.

strategy for oppression across human history[2] – black slaves are sub-human apes; Jews are leeches; immigrants are rats.

In Job 30:1–8, Job indulges in this strategy to vilify his low-class opponents.[3] He dehumanises the destitute, describing them as vile creatures in the wilderness. This article will analyse his dehumanising rhetoric. It will consider how he constructs a hybrid human-animal world, and inscribes it with mechanisms of oppression. However, he does not have the last word. In the divine speeches, God picks up on Job's language, but with a strikingly different tenor. He celebrates the animal world in which mechanisms of oppression fail. For Job, the non-human is a source of derision, but for God, it is a source of delight.

Before examining the text, let us consider its purpose and context. Job 30:1–8 is part of a wider speech by Job, chapters 29–31, which constitutes his last attempt to declare his innocence. In this speech, Job sketches a particular social world, structured by proper hierarchical relationships between discrete social groups (Hamilton 2007; Newsom 2003: 187–189). Job depicts his former honoured position atop the hierarchy (chapter 29), from which he has now fallen into shame and disgrace (chapter 30). He offers an elaborate oath of innocence (chapter 31), piling up evidence that he has adhered to proper socio-moral codes, and ought therefore to be vindicated.

Job 30:1–8 is structurally central to the speech, but it has struck some commentators as out of place. Elsewhere in Job 29–31, Job appears as a wholly righteous man, with a strong ethic of care for the poor (29:12–13, 15–16; 31:16–22). By contrast, in 30:1–8, Job disparages and

[2] For an overview of the history of dehumanisation in an American context, see Kim 2015: 24–60.

[3] Though modern understandings of 'class' are not straightforwardly applicable to the ancient Near East, I continue to use the term as a convenient designator of an individual's social status (based on a combination of, e.g., social, economic, cultural, political, and religious factors).

dehumanises the poor, revealing his contempt.[4] However, this apparent discrepancy can be explained. I suggest that 30:1–8 is not in fact out of keeping with the social ideology of 29–31. Already in chapter 29, cracks are evident in the apparently pristine façade (§1 below). It is as though, in chapter 30, one of those cracks has opened up into a fissure, through which we can peek at the shadowy underside (§2 below).

We may have more difficulty reconciling Job's ideology here with that elsewhere in the book.[5] In content, style, and rhetoric, Job's speech here is quite different from his earlier dialogues with his friends.[6] Its heavily structured social world is largely absent from the dialogues. It works within straightforward, traditional speech forms, while the dialogues had dismantled and subverted them. Its imagined addressees are persuadable and conciliatory, while those in the dialogues are combative and hostile (Newsom 2003: 183–184). And Job's ethics here appear to be undergirded by a problematic ideology, not so evident elsewhere.

These differences might be explained by the differing rhetorical purposes of different sections. Job here is no longer arguing with his friends; Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have receded from view. Rather, this speech has the feel of a public declaration to his society at large (notwithstanding a few verses addressed to God; 30:19–23). Carol Newsom imagines it as a testimony pronounced in the public assembly (קהל) of which Job speaks in 30:28 (Newsom 2003:

[4] Some commentators consider it to be an addition, not integral to Job 29–31 (e.g., Buttenwieser 1922: 258; Duhm 1897: 140; Driver & Gray 1921: 249). Others think it is a 'virtual quotation' of Job's thoughts in the past (e.g., Habel 1985: 414).

[5] We will later see specific instances where Job's words stand at odds with his earlier pronouncements, particularly regarding Job 3 and 24.

[6] The difference between this section and the rest of the book has led several scholars to question its integrity (e.g., Holbert 1983).

185–186). If this is so, Job seems to be working within the accepted structures of his interlocutors' world, rather than dismantling them (as he had done earlier). He speaks in a sociolect recognisable to his imagined interlocutors, who share this ideology and are persuadable by his rhetoric. His dehumanisation fits in with their rhetorical world. His intention is to show them that he belongs with them in the ingroup, and that all who oppose him should be expelled as a detestable outgroup.

With this rhetorical purpose in mind, let us proceed to a discussion, first of the ideology underlying Job's dehumanisation (as expressed in Job 29; §1), and then of the dehumanisation itself (30:1–8; §2). We will finally see how the divine speeches (especially Job 38:39–39:30; §3) undermine Job's rhetoric and ideology, and serve as a forceful challenge to his class-based and species-based prejudice.

§1. Job 29

§1.1 The human world in Job 29

Let us then examine the social world narrated in Job 29, which provides the ideological undergirdings for the subsequent dehumanisation. In this chapter, Job narrates his former life with a voice of nostalgic longing. If his imagined addressees are members of his former community, then he builds solidarity by lauding the system to which they subscribe. He flatters them by imagining their society as ideal humanity, a coherent ingroup, structured around proper relationships, norms, and values. He also self-promotes by imagining himself as the ideal human, legitimised by righteousness (29:14) and friendship with God (29:4).

In this world, nature serves culture. Natural imagery is harnessed, and used for Job's own self-aggrandizement. He has a monopoly over the life-giving liquids so vital in desert climes. Nature behaves unnaturally for Job, with rocks pouring forth oil, and butter washing his steps

(29:6). He himself is like a tree, with roots reaching for water, and dew-strewn boughs (29:19). And his thirsty contemporaries wait for him to bring the refreshing spring rains (29:23).

This world is constrained within the town, which becomes the locus of civilisation, productivity, and order, in opposition to the fearful beyond. Job sits at the city gate (29:7), guarding against the encroachment of the outside world. Here, he judges the marginalised (29:12-13, 15-16), ensuring their ingroup membership. And here too he judges the unrighteous, expelling them as fanged predators threatening the ideal humanity (29:17).

§1.2 Mechanisms of oppression in Job 29

A golden glow hovers over this depiction, but it masks deep ethical problems (Clines 1998; Good 1990; Marx 2016). In particular, the community is characterised by strict social stratification. Job's value system and personal status are built on the logic of inequality and subservience.[7] Job presents himself as a landed elite, sitting like a king or chief at the hierarchy's summit (29:25). The passage's spatial imagination is concentric, placing Job at the central pinnacle, surrounded first by his family in his home (29:5), and then by men at the town square (29:7-10), and finally by the poor on the margins (29:12-13) (Pelham 2012: 46–49; Newsom 1994: 11).

At all levels, proper relationships of deference and honour are enacted through physical displays. At home, his children gather round him (29:5). In the town, young men withdraw and old men are upstanding (29:8); princes and nobles restrain their speech (29:9–10, cf. 29:21–22). Those at the margins – the fatherless and widow (29:12-13), blind and lame (29:15), poor and needy (29:12, 16) – also perform their subservience: in return for provision and security, they offer Job gratitude and blessing (29:11, 13). Indeed, they almost deify him, ascribing to him traits

[7] See Marx 2016: 243–245 for a discussion of whether an alternative worldview undergirded by equality of all would have been possible in biblical times.

reserved elsewhere for God: in the biblical imagination, it is the deity whose face glows with beneficence (Job 29:24; cf., e.g., Num. 6:25; Pss. 4:7[6]; 89:16[15]), who brings the refreshment of spring rain (Job 29:23; cf., e.g., Lev. 26:4; Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24). These are transactions of the honour/shame economy, in which Job's value and status depend on the honour he is afforded. Through these relationships, the status of all actors is reinforced, and the stability of the group is ensured.

But this social arrangement becomes precarious if the actors refuse to play their roles. They then become a threat and must be expelled – physically and/or ideologically. Societies develop different strategies to achieve this ideological expulsion, but a commonly attested method is dehumanisation. Dehumanisation functions to delegitimise the threatening group, removing value and meaning from their persons and their actions (Opotow 1990). What they do or think is no longer consequential for the dominant ideology of the group. Dehumanisation can become a powerful tool to integrate the ingroup, assuage anxieties about the outgroup, and justify the status quo. This form of ideological expulsion is particularly common in groups with a Social Dominance Orientation; that is, anti-egalitarian beliefs that hierarchy is justified, and that domination is necessary (Esses *et al.* 2008; Hodson and Costello 2007). A low-status group in such a society is easily Othered and removed from full human status (Capozza *et al.* 2012; Loughnan *et al.* 2014; Volpato *et al.* 2017). Job depicts his society as ascribing to such an orientation. It is hence no surprise that he would turn to dehumanisation when a threat emerges from the margins.

§2. Job 30

Such a threat arises at the start of ch. 30. The poor, instead of bestowing on Job honour and gratitude, now mock and revile him. By subverting hierarchical relationships, they threaten the proper social order. Job hence dehumanises them, suggesting to his hearers that they do not belong to ideal or true humanity. Neither they nor their attitude towards Job is worthy of attention. Certain commentators are convinced, and collude with Job's rhetoric, describing the men as 'desert rats' (Hartley 1988: 397 n.10); 'like animals' (Ewald 1882: 278); 'like wild beasts' (Davidson 1884: 208); '[l]ess than human' (Andersen 1976: 235); 'coarse, wild animals, motivated by instinct and totally bereft of decency' (Alden 1994: 45).

וְעַתָּה שָׂחֲקוּ עָלַי	[1] But now they laugh at me,
צְעִירִים מִמֶּנִּי לְיָמִים	Those younger than me in days,
אֲשֶׁר־מָאַסְתִּי אֲבוֹתָם	Whose fathers I would have rejected
לָשִׁית עִם־כַּלְבֵי צֹאנִי׃	From setting with my sheepdogs.
גַּם־כֹּחַ יְדֵיהֶם לָמָּה לִּי	[2] As for the strength of their hands, what use is it to me?[8]
עָלֵימוֹ אָבַד כָּלַח׃	Concerning them[9] vigour[10] has perished.

[8] למה לי literally means 'for what to me'. It occurs in the meaning 'what use/gain is it to me' in Gen. 27:46; Isa. 1:11.

[9] 30:2b has been subject to many speculative emendations. See Clines 2006: 944 for details. עלימו seems to be the preposition על with an archaic 3mp ending. I take על here to be an 'על of specification', meaning 'concerning, as for' (cf. Gen. 41:32; Exod. 22:8; WHS §289).

[10] כלח occurs only here and in Job 5:26. On the basis of the Arabic cognate *kalaḥa* 'to be hard, stern', and the context of both passages, most commentators suggest 'firm vigour' or similar. For other alternatives, see Pinker 2014.

בְּחֶסֶר וּבְכָפָן גַּלְמוּד [3] In want and barren[11] hunger,[12]

הַעֹרְקִים צִיָּה They gnaw[13] the dry ground

אֶמֶשׁ שׁוֹאָה וּמְשֹׁאָה׃ By night,[14] in waste and desolation.

הַקֹּטְפִים מַלּוּחַ עֲלֵי־שִׂיחַ [4] They pluck saltwort[15] off the bush,[16]

וְשֹׁרֶשׁ רְתָמִים לַחְמָם׃ And broom root is their food.[17]

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[11] גלמוד is an adjective meaning "barren" in Job 3:7; 15:34; Isa. 49:21, while the Arabic cognates mean "stony" (BDB; Clines 2006: 944). If both nuances are present here, it may be a poetic way of describing the extreme emptiness of the men, whilst evoking the harsh unproductivity of the surrounding landscape.

[12] כפן 'hunger' occurs only here and in Job 5:22. In verbal form, it occurs in Ezek. 17:7 (of a vine 'stretching hungrily').

[13] ערק occurs only here and in Job 30:17 (of the night 'gnawing' Job's bones). As understood here, it is related to the Arabic cognate *'araqa*, meaning 'to gnaw'. Alternatively, it may be related to the Aramaic ערק, meaning 'to flee' (Clines 2006: 945).

[14] אמש has caused problems, as it seems to mean 'yesterday, last night' (Gen. 19:34; 31:21, 42; 2 Kgs 9:26), so it is sometimes been deleted or amended. In Hebrew and cognate languages, the referent time is often specifically night-time, hence my translation 'by night' (cf. Pope 1973).

[15] מלוח occurs in biblical Hebrew only here, though it recurs in postbiblical Hebrew with the meaning 'saltwort' – a desert plant growing in salt marshes. The word is derived from מֶלַח 'salt'.

[16] עלי שיח may be taken as a preposition על + the location of the saltwort. Alternatively, עֲלֵי might be the construct plural of עָלֶה 'leaf' – 'leaves of the bush'.

[17] לַחְמָם I take to be לֶחֶם with 3mp suffix 'their food', which works well with the description of unpalatable food in vv.3–4. It is sometimes suggested that it is a qal inf cons from חמם 'to be warm' (cf. Isa. 47:14), with the implication that the broom plant is used as fuel (cf. Ps. 120:4). However,

מִן־גֵּו יְגֹרָשׁוּ [5] From society[18] they are driven;

יָרִיעוּ עָלֵימוֹ כַּגַּנָּב׃ They shout after them as though after a thief.

בַּעֲרוּץ נְחָלִים לִשְׁכֹּן [6] In the gully[19] of wadis they dwell,

חֹרֵי עָפָר וְכֵפִים׃ In holes of the dust and rocks.

בֵּין־שִׂיחִים יִנְהָקוּ [7] Among the bushes they bray;[20]

תַּחַת חָרוּל יִסָּפָחוּ׃ Under the nettles they huddle together.[21]

בְּנֵי־נָבָל גַּם־בְּנֵי בְלִי־שֵׁם [8] Senseless and nameless ones,

נִכְּאוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ׃ They are scourged[22] from the land...

כִּי־יִתְרוֹ פִתַּח וַיְעַנֵּנִי ...[11] Because he has loosed my(Q)[23] cord and oppressed me

וְרֶסֶן מִפָּנַי שִׁלֵּחוּ׃ They cast off the bridle before me.

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we would probably expect a piel or pual to convey a causative sense (the fuel causes the people to be warm, rather than simply being warm itself). See discussions in Kuhn 1989; Yamaga 1984.

[18] גו occurs in Syriac and Phoenician meaning 'society, community'. This seems to be the sense here (HALOT 1:182a; DCH 2:328b).

[19] ערוץ is probably a cognate of Arabic *ʿiḍ/ ʿarḍ*, 'gully, valley'.

[20] נהק, here translated 'bray', occurs only here and Job 6:5, where it is predicated of the wild ass (פרא), and parallel to the 'lowing' (געה) of the ox. Cf. also UT Krt 120–123, where the 'braying of his donkey' (*nhqt ḥmrh*) is parallel to 'the lowing of his plow ox (*lgʿt alp ḥrṯ*) (Ceresko 1980: 56).

[21] ספח here is probably ספח I 'to join together'. ספח II means 'to pour out', and this meaning is occasionally suggested here, e.g., Davidson (1884: 208) 'fling themselves down'.

[22] נכא is usually taken as a biform of נכה ('to strike'), meaning 'to scourge'. Gordis suggests instead that it should be taken in the same sense as רוח נכאה 'lowly spirit' (Prov. 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), thus 'lower than the ground' (Gordis 1978: 332).

[23] K has 'his cord'; Q has 'my cord'.

This passage is striking in its opposition to chapter 29. Silence becomes laughter and braying; honour becomes shame; city becomes wilderness. The ideal human world is infringed by the repulsive animal, and the mechanisms for oppression begin to fail.

§2.1 The human/animal world in Job 30

If chapter 29 depicts the walled haven of the polis, chapter 30 ventures into the fearful beyond, the 'anti-world' as Abigail Pelham puts it (Pelham 2012). According to the symbolic map which Job had constructed, this geographically enacts his loss of status. This is the world of שׁואה ומשׁאה 'waste and desolation' (30:3), the sinister, chaotic Other which human culture builds walls to exclude. The threat of city turned to wilderness looms large in the gamut of prophetic punishments.[24] In contrast to the city, to which Job had brought fertile waterways (29:6, 19, 23), the ground here is dry (30:3), the wadis arid amongst the dust and rocks (30:6). And in contrast to the city, from which Job had expelled all fanged and threatening beasts (29:17), the wilderness of the Israelite imagination is haunted by sinister preternatural creatures.[25] Notwithstanding some genuine dangers (e.g., lions and bears), the anxiety generated by desert animals is disproportionate to their actual threat.

Such troubling creatures skulk into Job's sketch at 30:1–8. They have threatened the civilised city, and hence been banished into the wilderness. They have been 'driven from society' (מן־גו יגרשׁו, 30:5), 'scourged from the land' (נכאו מן־הארץ, 30:8). Such expulsion is necessary to

[24] E.g., Zeph. 2:13; Hos. 2:3; Joel 2:3; Ps. 107:33-34.

[25] Isa. 13:19-22; 34:8-15; Zeph. 2:13-15; Mal. 1:2-3. Many Ugaritic text also describe demonic creatures in the wilderness (Ceresko 1980: 42–44).

protect the integrity of the ingroup. But Job no longer oversees this expulsion, seated as the adjudicator at the city gate. Rather, he finds himself amongst those driven out.

The figure of one excluded simultaneously from the city, and from full human status, recurs across human civilisations.[26] Georgio Agamben (1998) exemplifies this with the *homo sacer* of Roman law – a criminalised individual, cast from the city, killed without sanction. His existence is reduced from *bios* (the civil life of a citizen) to *zoe* (the physical life of a creature). But he is not fully animalised. He inhabits a liminal space, 'a threshold of indistinction'. He 'is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and ... dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither' (1998: 105, italics original). Other societies might fear and castigate *homo alalus* 'ape-man' (2003: 37) or *wargus* 'wolf-man' (1998: 104–111). Indeed (though the perception of real threat is largely lost to us), the werewolf still prowls between city and forest in the dark imagination of contemporary horror.[27]

Similarly, those driven from the city in Job 30 are somewhere between human and animal. Their behaviours are animalistic, but not wholly inconceivable for humans. No identification with a particular animal is made, and what emerges is a shadowy hybrid.[28] The creatures skulk in the liminal space of betwixt and between, where categories are ill-defined. This sort of liminality is common in dehumanising rhetoric. Claire Jean Kim, commenting on the dehumanisation of

[26] Josephus, for example, speaks of the criminal, cast out of society and forced to eat grass like a wild animal (Josephus *War* II viii.8). Cf. also Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4:25, 32.

[27] Amongst others, see contemporary horror films *Ginger Snaps* (directed by John Fawcett, 2000); *The Wolfman* (directed by Joe Johnston, 2010); *Night of the Wolf* (directed by David S. Cass Sr., 2014).

[28] Lance Hawley (2018: 161) notes that 'the text makes best sense as a collage of desert animal projections'.

Blacks, Indians, and Chinese in America, notes that they are depicted 'in the border-lands between human and animal, a fraught zone of ambiguity, menace, and transgression' (Kim 2015: 24). Such a dehumanisation is subtle, less instinctive to reject, and all the more insidious.[29]

No single animal fits all the characteristics described in Job 30:1–8. Some of the language seems to imagine Job's detractors as wild dogs (Hawley 2018: 164–65) – hiding in holes (30:6), huddling under bushes (30:7) – a connection primed by the explicit mention of dogs in 30:1. The bulk, however, best suits the onager (wild donkey). Job's use of a non-predatory, relatively powerless animal has a twin effect: it reduces their threat, when Job is in a position of vulnerability, and it increases the pathos of Job's situation, for he is not able to control even them. Onagers can survive in desert conditions unliveable for humans.[30] They need no butter, oil, and fertilizing rains (29:6, 23), but graze on whatever hidden nourishment they find. Job describes them gnawing the dry ground (30:3; perhaps revealing his ignorance of the low-lying grasses and roots potentially found there [Hawley 2018: 162]). They consume unpalatable food like saltwort (מלוח), named as the food of the destitute in the Talmud (B. Qiddushin 66a), and broom root (שׁרשׁ רתמים), which is inedible for humans.[31]

[29] The extensive psychological research of Jacques-Philippe Leyens and colleagues shows that even the most subtle dehumanisation (infrahumanisation) can be extremely powerful (e.g., Leyens *et al.* 2007).

[30] Cf. the description of the wild ass making its home in the wastelands in *Dialogue of Pessimism* 1.28.

[31] Some interpreters reject this reading for this reason. However, it might be an intentional hyperbole (Yamaga 1984). Hawley (2018: 163) explains it in two ways: the wild asses feed on the bark of saxaul, which is very similar to broom; or they eat the pea pods and shoots that grow near to the broom.

These descriptions engender revulsion. Like the 'slavering ... mongrels spoiling for a scrap' with which this article opened, these creatures have revolting eating habits. Many would retch at these wretches' mouthfuls of dust, salt, and roots. And this disgust, provoked by unpalatable food, may be further elicited by illicit sexuality.[32] The creatures join together (סָפַח) in bushes, braying (נָהַק; 30:7). The donkey's bray might be a response to extreme hunger (cf. Job 6:5), but it may also be a cry of sexual longing or activity (e.g., Clines 2006: 1000). Equine neighing is sexualised in Jer. 5:8, 13:27, and licentiousness is one of the most pervasive characterisations of the donkey across the ANE (Way 2006: 211). In an honour-shame society, structured by strict inter-relational and sexual codes (e.g., Job 31:1, 9), improper sexual activity may be not only contraband, but also revolting.[33]

Food and sex heighten the repulsion already inherent in dehumanisation. As shown by neuro-imaging studies, dehumanised groups do not stimulate the section of the brain associated with social interaction (the medial prefrontal cortex). Rather, they stimulate a chemical response of disgust (amygdala and insulin reactions; Harris & Fiske 2006; cf. Goldenberg *et al.* 2001; Hodson & Costello 2007; Esses *et al.* 2008; Haslam, Loughnan & Sun 2011). The affective and visceral components contribute greatly to the power of dehumanisation in general, and of Job's rhetoric in particular. Disgust provokes fear of contamination (e.g., Olatunji *et al.* 2004). The disgusting substance, activity, and creatures must be withdrawn from and avoided. By casting his opponents in these terms, Job urges his hearers to reject those who have rejected him.

[32] Both food and improper sexuality are common disgust elicitors cross-culturally (e.g., Haidt *et al.* 1997).

[33] See Kuntsman (2009) and Tyler (2008) for how the disgust reactions elicited by improper sexuality and low social class can be intertwined.

§2.2 Failing mechanisms of oppression in Job 30

Who are the inhabitants of this human/animal world, and why are they dehumanised? The face-value answer is that they are Job's deriders, dehumanised because of their derision. However, there is more than this: in light of the social structures and mechanisms suggested in Job 29, a socio-economic identification can also be made. As we have seen, the strict social hierarchy of ch. 29 created conditions where the lowest class could easily slip out of the ingroup to become a dehumanised Other. If they violate the contract of deference towards Job, the poor and destitute become easy targets for his vitriol.

Job maligns the men, not for what they do to him, but for their lowly lineage. This class prejudice is also replicated in some 19th and 20th century scholarship which conspires with Job's rhetoric. According to commentators, the men are: 'base-born races' (Davidson 1884: 207); 'of low extraction' (Dhorme 1967: 429); 'sprung from a heathen, insignificant race' (Ewald 1882: 278); 'low-class ruffians' (Whybray 1998: 128). According to Job, they are sons of men he 'would have rejected from setting with [his] sheepdogs' (30:1), i.e., the lowest in the social hierarchy. The insult is double-pronged: the fathers may have less social capital than shepherds (who keep the dogs),[34] or less than the dogs themselves. In biblical literature, dogs often connote filth and baseness, and are associated with death and destruction: savage enemies are hounds (e.g., Pss. 22:16, 20; 59:14), and pariah dogs lick up blood (e.g., 1 Kgs 21:19, 22:38). Comparing a human to a dog, as here, is a strong humiliation (e.g., 1 Sam. 17:32; 24:24; 2 Kgs 9:13).

No less significant than the dog is the donkey (which provides most of the animal imagery in this passage). Indeed, the wild donkey was sometimes an image for socio-economic destitution

[34] Dogs are described as guardian of the flock in Isa. 56:10-11. In Iron Age strata of some sites (e.g., Tel Michal, Beersheba, and 'Izbet Sarta), dog bones have been found together with caprid bones, suggesting that dogs may have been used as sheepdogs (Borowski 1998: 147 n.4).

across the ancient Near East (Kozlova 2017). At a time of greater compassion, Job himself had employed the image. He had formerly condemned those who 'thrust the poor off the road' (24:4), who forced the destitute to behave like 'wild donkeys in the desert' (24:5).[35] Now, he speaks like those he had condemned. He continues to use the donkey as an image of deprivation, describing the desert lifestyle of ones lacking food (24:5–6; 30:3-4) and shelter (24:7–8; 30:6-7). But his tone of compassion has turned to one of contempt.

He labels the men as 'senseless and nameless ones' (בני־נבל גם־בני בלי־שם; 30:8), revealing the social worlds to which he and they belong. 'Senseless' (נבל) denotes a social infraction, commonly associated with the lowest classes (Clines 1989: 54). And in a culture where having a 'name' means having honour and respectability, being 'nameless' indicates contempt. Removing from them their שם, Job throws them into shame.

The men are maligned for breaking from the mechanisms of subservience intended to keep them at the bottom of the hierarchy. And the animal comparison is apt here because animals serve within this hierarchy too. The 'domestications' of animals and low-status humans are undergirded by common ideologies, institutions, and practices. The one provides a 'model and training ground' for the other (Patterson 2002: 12). So shepherds, sheepdogs, and domestic donkeys are valued for offering loyalty and practical service.[36] Job's detractors are worth less because, like wild dogs or onagers, they refuse these offerings. Instead of loyal, deferential silence (cf. 29:9-10, 21-22), they break into mocking laughter (30:1), and they have no strength for physical service (30:2). They

[35] The apparent connection between these passages has let some to suggest a literary relationship between them. Buttenwieser (1922: 258), for example, suspects that 30:2–8 is an early, inferior draft of the text eventually incorporated in 24:5–11.

[36] Way (2006: 234) describes how donkeys are distinctively described as loyal in Hebrew Bible texts.

lack warmth and competence, and thereby adhere to a cross-cultural stereotype for low-status groups. This stereotype aggravates, and is aggravated by, dehumanisation (Harris & Fiske 2006; Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto 2007; Vaes *et al.* 2012).

For such non-compliant creatures, there are physical tools which might persuade them. In the ancient Near East, ropes and chains lead cattle and slaves; whips spur them into action.[37] In Job 30:11b, Job's detractors wear a 'bridle' (רסן).[38] This device controls a donkey's movement, forcing it into the transactional human economy. Job thus attempts to impose constrains appropriate to the men's status. In such a bridle, they would owe Job labour and deference, perhaps constrained to the gate of the walled city with the poor and the perishing (29:7, 12-13). Controlled

[37] E.g., one Mesopotamian text, commenting on the punishment of a slave, reads 'I have beaten your body red with a whip like a runaway ass' (Jacoby 1994: 90). For the connection between human slavery and animal domestication, see Jacoby 1994, esp. pp. 91–92 on the technologies of domestication.

[38] The meaning of 11a is uncertain. It reads 'for he [presumably God] has loosed my cord [Q] and oppressed me'. The cord (יתר) is usually thought to be either Job's tent cord (cf. Job 4:21), symbolising the demise of his household, or his bowstring (cf. Ps. 11:2), symbolising his newfound defencelessness. Both of these readings are difficult and do not fit well with 11b. I suggest continuing the equine metaphor, and understanding the cord as the reins with which Job has been controlling his detractors (cf. Tur-Sinai 1957: 424). Now that Job is unable to oppress his opponents, he considers it an oppression from God. There is evidence of donkeys being controlled by bridles/bits across the ANE from the Early Bronze Age. See especially recent discoveries of dental evidence of bit use in a donkey in Tel es-Safi (Gath) from c. 2800-2600 BCE, and the other evidence cited in this article (Greenfield *et al.* 2018; cf. Way 2006: 166, 171–74).

by their mouth, they would neither laugh (30:1), nor bray (30:7), but maintain deferential silence (29:9-10, 21-22).

Job mainly forgets his animal imagery in the rest of chapter 30, but returns to it for a final rhetorical flourish: self-dehumanisation:

קֹדֵר הָלַכְתִּי בְּלֹא חַמָּה	[28] I have gone about darkened, but not by the sun[39]
קַמְתִּי בַקָּהָל אֲשַׁוֵּעַ׃	I have arisen in the assembly and am crying out.
אָח הָיִיתִי לְתַנִּים	[29] I have been a brother to jackals
וְרֵעַ לִבְנוֹת יַעֲנָה׃	And a friend to ostriches
עוֹרִי שָׁחַר מֵעָלָי	[30] My skin has turned black from upon me
וְעַצְמִי־חָרָה מִנִּי־חֹרֶב׃	And my bones[40] have burnt from parching heat.

Job situates himself back in the city, to participate in the transactional system of public assembly. As noted above, this locus provides an appropriate imagined scenario for the whole of 29–31. In chapter 29, ingroup members had gathered to the public square (29:7), and those who cried for help (שׁוע; 29:12) were provided for. But Job is no longer an in-group member. His disabled, disfigured, dark-skinned self is not recognisably human, and is accordingly thrust out into the wilderness, to stand alongside jackals and ostriches. His own cry for help (שׁוע; 30:28) is considered akin to their animal wail (cf. Mic. 1:8).

[39] חמה is a noun relating to חמם 'to be warm'. It is parallel to 'moon' (לְבָנָה), and thus clearly refers to the 'sun', in Cant. 6:10; Isa. 24:23; 30:26. I take this to be the sense here.

[40] The form עצמי is singular 'my bone', but seems to refer to bones collectively (cf. Job 19:20; Ps. 102:6[5]; Prov. 15:30).

Jackals and ostriches are unlikely companions for Job. They are known for haunting the ruins of human habitation,[41] and as such are boundary-crossing, symbolic of the incursion of wildness into civilisation – precisely the incursion which Job's walled city of chapter 29 had sought to prevent. It is a touch of pathos that Job uses the language of intimate relationship here – brother (אח) and friend (רע) – to stress his ostracism from the human world. And indeed, social ostracism is a common psychological trigger for self-dehumanisation (Bastian & Haslam 2010, 2011). This is a shocking and effective climax to his rhetorical assault. Sympathetic hearers have accepted Job's self-narration as a paragon of the civilised, human world (chapter 29). They may hence react in outrage at his condition, distinguishing his cry from that of the wild, and reinstating him in their midst.

§3. Job 38:39–39:30

So, what might be done about Job's dehumanisation? A humanist might lament that, for Job, 'the poor are worth no more than wild animals' (Marx 2016: 242).[42] But this implies something troubling about 'wild animals': that they have little value. The 'animal', in this view, is rightly dominated and oppressed. The problem only comes when a human is assigned this label.

However, for post-humanists, this is problematic. Animal and human oppressions are entangled and co-dependent. So long as society permits a category of beings who can be oppressed and killed with impunity[43] (call it the 'animal' category), then this category can be wielded against

[41] Isa. 13:21-22, 34:13; Jer. 9:11, 10:22, 49:33, 50:39, 51:37; Lam. 5:18; Ezek. 13:4; Mal. 1:3.

[42] Translation mine. Original: 'les pauvres ne valent pas plus que des animaux sauvages'.

[43] Derrida famously described this as 'noncriminal putting to death' (Derrida 1995: 278).

many beings – lower classes, wild beasts, women, vermin, the disabled.[44] 'Dehumanisation' will exist as a strategy of oppression so long as the 'non-human' is legitimately oppressed.

In the divine speeches, God anticipates this post-humanist move. He does not directly respond to Job.[45] Rather, he immerses Job in a wholly restructured moral imagination (Newsom 2003). In so doing, he picks up on Job's themes and vocabulary, reorienting and critiquing them. God defangs Job's dehumanisation, not by saying the human isn't animal, but by celebrating the animal.

§3.1 The animal world in Job 38:39–39:30

In Job 38-39, the centripetal thrust of Job's spatial imagination, in which society gathers around Job as its central point, is replaced by the centrifuge of divine rhetoric, which shoots the focus into the expanse. The reader is taken to the very extremities of the universe: the foundations of the earth (38:4-7), the limits of the sea (38:8-11), the recesses of the deep (38:16), the gates of death (38:17). Job's parochial city walls seem pitiful within this cosmic compass. Job had revealed his anxiety about this fearful beyond, this שׁוֹאָה וּמְשׁוֹאָה ('waste and desolation'; 30:3). Yahweh picks up this same expression, but in celebratory mode (38:27). No longer is human culture dominant, or the sole beneficiary of divine favour. Instead, Yahweh ordains 'to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert with no person in it' (לְהַמְטִיר עַל־אֶרֶץ לֹא־אִישׁ מִדְבָּר לֹא־אָדָם בּוֹ; 38:26).

[44] Cf. Dell'Aversano (2010: 97): 'our oppression of non-human animals carves out a space in every human society for a class of sentient beings to whom no rights are ascribed and for a form of murder which goes unnoticed and unsanctioned'.

[45] The literature on whether, and in what way, God responds to Job is extensive. See, e.g., Brenner 1981; Gowan 1986; Prideaux 2010; Tsevat 1966 for a variety of opinions.

The dethroning of humans is powerfully evident in the descriptions which follow (38:39-39:30). Humans are occasionally mentioned, but as tangential and inconsequential.[46] The focus is on the animals who stand opposed to human culture (Keel 1978) – the undomesticated, the unclean, the victims of the hunt. From God's perspective, they are not shameful or transgressive or shadowy hybrids, but full-bodied, individualised 'selves' (Brown 2010: 128), described in exuberant detail.

The closest parallels with Job 30 come in the descriptions of the wild donkey (Job 39:5-8) and wild ox (Job 39:9-12). Job had established an opposition of city and wilderness which valued the city for its civilised order, and devalued the wilderness for its fearful chaos. He lamented being 'driven from society' (30:5) and 'scourged from the land' (30:8). God's description of the onager reverses this value judgment. The onager 'scorns the tumult of the city' (39:7) in favour of the desert. The desert, in turn, is no place of exile or instability, but his 'dwelling' (משכן, 39:6b) and 'home' (בית, 39:6a).[47] And the landscape, though apparently barren, is his 'pasture' (מרעה, 39:8). He lives on the salt land (מלחה, 39:6), but is not restricted (like Job's detractors) to unpalatable saltwort (מלוח, 30:4). Rather, he dines on 'every green thing' (כל-ירוק, 39:8).

§3.2 Failed mechanisms of oppression in Job 38:39–39:30

In this animal world, the mechanisms of oppression have failed. A comparison is implied between the wild (the onager [פרא/ערוד; 39:5–8] and auroch [רים;[48] 39:9–12]) and the domestic (the ass [חמור] and ox [בקר]). The former are celebrated as free from human control; the latter are pitied

[46] The spurned driver of oxen, 39:7; the horse's rider, 39:18; the slain of the battle, 39:30.

[47] See Pelham 2012: 143–148 on the importance of 'home' in these texts.

[48] The term is spelt defectively here (cf. Ps. 22:22). Usually it is ראם (e.g., Num. 23:22, 24:8; Deut. 33:17)

as subjugated to it. The specific language refers to human-animal oppressions, but the wider principle applies to human-human oppressions too. Indeed, these two are not separable. In the agricultural economy, ass, ox, and farmhand perform joint service (cf. Job 1:14-15); sheepdog and shepherd toil together (Job 30:1-2).

Though Job has participated in oppression in Job 30, he earlier lauded freedom. In his first lament, he described destitute humans, wistfully imagining their freedom from oppression: prisoners 'hear not the voice of the taskmaster (נגשׂ)', and 'the slave is free (חפשׁי) from his master' (3:18-19). The terminology here is specifically human: in the Hebrew Bible, the taskmaster (נגשׂ) subjugates humans only, and humans only are set free (חפשׁי). In the divine speeches, God appropriates this language, and uses it to celebrate animal freedom: the wild ass 'hears not the shouts of the taskmaster (נוגשׂ)' (39:7), and is 'set free (חפשׁי)' (39:5).

God picks up on Job's language and themes in other ways too. Job had lamented that he could not rely on the lowlife's strength (כח, 30:2), and God comments that Job cannot rely on the ox's strength (כח, 39:11). But while Job had reasoned that the lowlife was too weak to be profitable, God shifts the balance of power: the ox is too strong for exploitation. And, what's more, the ox must be willing (אבה) to serve him (39:9) – a note of agency and choice rarely allowed to the subjugated masses.

Indeed, not even physical instruments can constrain these creatures. The ox refuses the ropes which would bind him into subservience (39:10). Leviathan, paragon of creaturely independence, spurns hooks and ropes (40:25-26[41:1-2]), harpoons and spears (40:30-31[41:6-7]), arrows, slingshots, clubs and javelins (41:20-21[28-29]) – and, picking up on Job's favoured mechanism, bridles (רסן; 41:5[13]). Job was distressed when, in 30:11, his cord was loosened (פתח) and the bridle was cast aside (שׁלח). But God is jubilant when, in 39:5, the donkey's bonds are loosened (פתח), and it is set (שׁלח) free.

We have seen the uneasy power relationships within this economy. A man at the top of the hierarchy has power over his dependants by virtue of his status and resources. Yet he only has this status because of their deference, and he only has these resources because of their labour. He is, then, dependent on his dependants. In Job 39, this is pushed to its absurd extreme. As Job was almost deified in 29:23-24, the ox is almost deified here. Job is scoffingly asked whether he will 'trust in' (בטח ב) and 'believe in' (האמין ב) the ox; language elsewhere commonly applied to God (39:11-12; Balentine 2006: 664). This makes a mockery of elite claims to power.

The mocking tone is shared by the creatures themselves. Their laughter interrupts and destabilises the structures intended to subdue their spirit (Claassens 2015). The butt of their joke is human attempts at control. The onager laughs (שׂחק, 39:7) at the city; the ostrich at the warrior (39:18); the horse at the battle (39:22); Leviathan at the javelin (41:21[29]). [49] In a similar way, the outcasts laugh (שׂחק, 30:1) at Job. This laughter can be understood as a protest against mechanisms of oppression, absurdist joy in the face of sinister power. As Bussie puts it, 'laughter helps the sufferer resist internalization of the oppressor's values, including the oppressors' dehumanization of the oppressed' (Bussie 2003: 32; cited in Claassens 2015: 147).

And this laughter – though it mocks Job and the system to which he subscribes – might provide him some redemption too. God has thoroughly undermined the structures of Job's moral imagination (Newsom 2003), and defanged his rhetoric, but he might offer Job an invitation too. Job had earlier dehumanised himself, considering himself akin to a wailing ostrich (30:29). But in God's representation of the ostrich,[50] this cry is turned into laughter. The ostrich flaps her wings delightedly (39:13), laughs (39:18), and is without fear (39:16): she is, according to Carol Newsom,

[49] Cf. also 40:20, where the wild animals laugh/play (שׂחק) in the presence of Behemoth.

[50] Assuming the conventional identification of the רננים with the ostrich. For an alternative identification (the sandgrouse), see Walker-Jones 2005.

'an image of pure heedless joy' (Newsom 2003: 247). She is not even called her usual name (יענה), but rather רננים, from רנן – cries of exultation (39:13). Perhaps when Job has reoriented his perspectives on the human and animal worlds, he can join the jubilation.

Conclusion

Job's world, then, has moved from the human world of the city, where nature serves culture and Job guards the boundaries (Job 29, §1.1) – to a hybrid human-animal world beyond the city, where nature refuses to serve, and boundaries begin to dissolve (Job 30, §2.1) – to the animal world of the wild expanse, where nature is celebrated and celebrates, apart from humanity (Job 38:39–39:30, §3.1). And Job's entourage has changed from the lowly, oppressed through service and deference (Job 29, §1.2) – to the lowly who cast off their bridle, refusing to serve and defer (Job 30, §2.2) – to the free animal Others, who scorn human attempts at control (Job 38:39–39:30, §3.2).

Job's rhetoric in 29–30 depends on a worldview of hierarchy and domination. Non-human animals in this world are assumed to occupy the bottom rung. They thus become rhetorically useful: using animals to imagine a low-status group functions to delegitimise and discount it. Such a worldview is still evident in much contemporary society, and many outgroups are still dehumanised in public rhetoric. In Job, the divine response is a radical restructuring of the socio-moral world. Those at the bottom – non-human animals – are liberated from structures of oppression, and celebrated in their free individuality. This might have implications in all quarters of human and non-human society – not least for the dehumanised masses in our own world.

I wonder how Job would feel if, with this fresh perspective, he remembered his dehumanisation. I wonder whether the non-hierarchical animal world would undermine his aspirations to human hierarchy, or whether the creature's freedom would make him rethink his oppression. We do not know. The final epilogue in 42:7–17 gives a mixed picture. I have always been saddened that, after the celebration of animal freedom, we find Job here as lord over 23,000

domesticated beasts (42:12). I do note, though, that while in the prologue his cattle were classed alongside his servants (1:3, 14-15, 16, 17), in the epilogue the servants are missing. And there is a further touch of egalitarianism in his endowment of his daughters with an inheritance (42:15). Perhaps, then, though Job has apparently not accepted God's vision of freedom for animals, he has let it curtail the oppression of humans. And that, at least, might cause Job's God delight.

Abbreviations

BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. 1977 *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

DCH David J. A. Clines. 1993-2011. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (8 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).

HALOT Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and J. J. Stamm. 2000. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (5 vols.; Leiden: Brill).

War Flavius Josephus. 1927. *The Jewish War* (Loeb Classical Library; trans. H. St. J. Thackeray; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

WHS R. J. Williams. 2007. *William's Hebrew Syntax* (3rd edn; revised and expanded by J. C. Beckman. Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

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